

The Normal Life

The Problem

Profane society is abnormal. A society with no aim or purpose except material acquisition either individual or communal is an historical oddity. It occurs from time to time; usually at the decay of some great world-order order. It happened during the last centuries of the Roman Empire and during the last centuries of the Babylonian Empire. It is happening today. Even during patriarchy, it has been usual for the structure of life (and particularly of peasant life, which has been the life of most people throughout history) to be based primarily on spiritual rather than material considerations. The profane myth that human history) to be based primarily on spiritual rather than material considerations. The profane myth that human history is the story of a prolonged struggle for control over the environment and the betterment of material considerations conditions, leading from the caves to the modern technocratic utopia, is not only refuted by spiritual knowledge (which tells us that man began her earthly history as a spiritual creature having perfect control over her environment, which she only lost by her gradual descent into matter); it is also refuted by a simple study of history, which shows that for the average person in the average century life was

neither rich nor poor, and she had better things to think about than the betterment of her material conditions.

A normal society is normal not only in the quantitative sense - that it is by far the most usual and frequent type of society - but in the far more important and qualitative sense; that it is a society striving to manifest the norm or pattern of fallen humanity, laid down by the Divine: that pattern by which human life is rendered as perfect as possible within the limits of its fallen condition and the level of its decline into matter, and by which human activity and society acts as the best possible instrument for the liberation and spiritual advancement of each individual.

No patriarchal society can be truly normal in this sense (nor even, considering that the vast majority of human history has been matriarchal, in the quantitative sense), but a thoroughly profane society such as the one prevailing in both eastern and western Europe (the minor differences of ideology between one materialistic system and another are of negligible importance from an overall spiritual point of view) and extending throughout the world by economic and/or military force is abnormal to a quite extraordinary degree.

Every physical act has a spiritual meaning. Every word we speak, every action we make, as well as the environment with which we surround ourselves, has a definite effect upon our spiritual nature and on the whole "spiritual atmosphere" in which we exist. The cumulative effect of all our actions, words and gestures, together with those of the people around us, together with such things as decor, music, entertainment, clothes, modes of transport and the countless other "soul-shaping" influences to which we are constantly exposed, is to build into us an almost unbreakable pattern. This is because our dual physical/spiritual nature is so constructed that it cannot act or be acted upon on one plane without a corresponding action on the other.

This fact is used by a normal society in order to build up patterns which lead the soul back to its true spiritual home, not only in a relatively limited number of periods set aside for worship or contemplation, but through every action of her everyday life. This, indeed, is the norm or pattern of human life laid down by the Goddess from the beginning. The pattern is built into the very structure of life on our planet. The divine Mysteries are continually expressed through the cycles of the seasons and of the moon. Every human community, however far it may have strayed from strict spiritual truth, has recognised these facts and enshrined

them both in its religious rites and in the rituals of everyday life. Every human community, that is, with the solitary exception of the specifically profane society.

Superficially, it would seem that the great mistake of profane societies, is that they are able to see only the outward and physical results of human activities, that they completely ignore their far more important spiritual aspect. In looking at human existence, they miss the central and salient feature (its spiritual reality) and focus wholly on what is merely accidental, merely the medium through which it is expressed; like the one who, seeing a great painting, should comment only on the quality of the canvas.

But it must not be forgotten that every material phenomenon is in essence a spiritual phenomenon, including materialism itself; and while the human architects of the profane society are for the most part quite ignorant of the inner meaning of their own actions, the spiritual forces which stand behind them know only too well what they are doing. This is evidenced by the fact that the results of profane activity are never "spiritually neutral", but rather the whole momentum of profane society is geared to the undermining and destruction of the relationship of humanity with the Divine. Even Technological society systematically severs human contact with the

seasons, taking the vast majority away from the land, mechanising what little agricultural work remains, creating ^{work} which has no seasonal variation of any sort. Natural rhythms are supplanted by mechanical rhythms. The cult of speed is inculcated in every area, creating reflexes of haste and superficiality which are directly contrary to the habit of contemplation and deep thought. To the same end a constant barrage of noise, and a constant stream of mass "entertainment" are maintained. Traditional forms in dress and custom, which usually preserve some trace of the profound spiritual principles upon which all dress and custom were once based, are systematically eradicated, even where they pose no threat to "efficiency". Similar examples can be listed in every area of life.

Every act is a ritual act with a ritual effect; and the effect of this vast profane ritual (or anti-ritual) is to create a great network of discordant vibrations which are wholly destructive of spiritual harmony both in the individual and in society as a whole.

Although profane society is not by any means a new phenomenon, its successive manifestations have increased in intensity throughout recorded history. The decadence of the Babylonian empire was a relatively local occurrence. Roman materialism, using its

undoubted advantages on the physical plane, expanded over the whole of Europe, north Africa and the Middle East. Nevertheless, not only did it leave untouched vast areas of the globe, such as the Far East and the Americas, but since it had no great effect on the actual methods of agriculture, the areas at any distance from the main Imperial centres retained in many respects a way of life unbroken by disruptive influences. As the Empire fell victim to its own innate spiritual dissonance, and came to its inevitable conclusion, there was a break-up of the great metropolitan centres and a massive flight to the land, where the more traditional life-style provided the basis for a return to the relative sanity of a "normal" patriarchal society.

During recorded history, there has never been such a thoroughgoing attempt to permeate profane structures throughout the world. Every major area has been taken over, the life of the land has been undermined, and even the smallest pockets of resistance are being systematically eradicated. Tribal traditions are destroyed in Africa by centralised bureaucracies under the guidance of east or west European neo-colonialists, the mountain fastnesses of Tibet are invaded by China under the banner of a western materialism. Indeed, wherever any vestige of a normal spiritually-based life-style survives, it is fighting a losing battle

against the economic and political forces pitted against it. The patriarchal religious organisations, even where they do represent a genuine spiritual concern, have too little spiritual knowledge even to understand what is taking place, and for the most part lend their support to the very forces which are destroying them in one form or another. By accepting the division between "religious" and "secular" life, the patriarchal religions have compromised the very principle upon which religion is based and undermined their own foundations. It is no coincidence that this contradiction lies at the very foundation of that religion which has been most bound up with and implicated in the development of modern profanity, in the words "render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's". Nothing belongs to Caesar, ^{because} ~~belongs~~ all life belongs to God. If Caesar is given anything, there is no logical reason why he should not have everything. Which is exactly what has happened.

But when a civilisation is spiritually disrupted the seeds of its material destruction are already sown. That lesson is clear both from spiritual knowledge and from history. Anyone who has given the smallest study to the ecological crises facing modern civilisation over the coming century will realise how close that destruction is in physical terms, even assuming that the nightmarish arsenals of nuclear and other "advanced" weaponry are

not unleashed upon the world. People who have studied the subject are constantly amazed that governments with the facts of almost unavoidable disaster before them simply treat the problem as if it did not exist. What they cannot know, studying the subject from a purely material standpoint, is that this problem is not in itself the disease which is destroying profane civilisation, but merely the physical symptoms of a far greater spiritual disease; and that even if catastrophe could in some way be circumvented, without a complete spiritual re-orientation of society, it would only be a postponement of the inevitable.

From a long term spiritual/historical perspective, what is far more disturbing than the fact that profane society is in its final days is the fact that it has spent these days in destroying all the things which might provide human life with continuity after its demise. Unless a very sudden change of direction takes place - of which there are no signs - there will not be any remnant of a normal life-style left in any part of the globe to which the refugees of the collapsing civilisation may flee for shelter and which may become the basis for renewal. It is this which makes the modern phase of profanity more dangerous than any of its predecessors.

Yet even this is not a mere "accident" of the material level. Even in this a definite pattern can be traced. Ever since the ending of the matriarchal period (which can almost be termed a "second Fall"), there has been a steady and continual decline or downward spiral. Each profane phase has been more intense and more widespread than its predecessor. Each "recovery" after the inevitable downfall of the profane civilisation has been less complete, incorporating religions even further removed from the archetypal Faith, and forms of society ever further removed from the archetypal Faith, and forms of society ever further removed from the authentic Norm.

We have now reached the extreme point of descent, at which we are confronted with a sort of mirror-image or inverted parody of normal world-order. During the matriarchal period (except in the last decadence) a single faith was held in every part of the world. Throughout the various phases of matriarchal civilisation over countless thousands of years, the one religion was that revealed by the Goddess from the beginning of earthly existence. Although social forms in different times and places varied over this vast period, each ~~was~~ one was essentially normal, in that it was based on absolute spiritual principles and always judged every action not by its outward result or "efficiency" but by its

spiritual or ritual effect." After the "second Fall", spiritual Truth was fragmented. Different civilisations took up different aspects of the Truth and allowed others to drop. Everywhere the essential Centre and guiding image of the one Goddess was cast aside. Thus the one complete Religion was replaced by a variety of partial religions. Every patriarchal society abandoned the Norm, but each fell further from it or came closer to it, passed through profane phases and quasi-normal phases according to the vicissitudes of each particular culture. Now, for the first time since the matriarchal period, the world adheres to a single faith, a dogmatic scientific materialism completely closed to any form of spiritual reality (it matters little whether the adherents of this faith pay lip-service to the masculinist religions, or rather to the burnt-out shells of them); and the whole world stands in the same relationships to the social Norm: that of complete rejection and alienation.

The long process of decline is rapidly approaching its ultimate point: the total

* Which, incidentally, was as successful in achieving happiness, peace and - within the limits prescribed by a non-materialist society - prosperity as civilisations wholly devoted to these temporal aims have been unsuccessful.

inversion of the normal state of human existence. After this there can be no new "dawning", for the now-dwindling spiritual reserves left over from the patriarchal period will finally have been exhausted.

The human race is rapidly approaching spiritual extinction; and extinction in the spiritual plane would, of course, be mirrored immediately on the physical. The instruments of this physical extinction are already in place, awaiting only the touch of a button.

Is there any escape from this extinction? In the strict logic of cause and effect, there can be no escape. But we must not forget that the sacrifice of the Daughter permeates the whole of fallen creation, and that through this, the mystery of many may always override the logic of causality. Through the death and resurrection, every death contains the potentiality of a resurrection. Even now, She is actively making available the means of a new birth. The religion of the matriarchies has not moved beyond a reality on earth. The seeds are being sown from which a new world may arise out of the ashes of the old. But the Godless cannot see us without our active participation, for that would be to destroy our free will. She is making the way ready for us, but we must take it. This means finally that we must return to

Her spiritually; but it must be a return which involves not only an intellectual decision, but a radical ~~transformation~~ of re-orientation of our whole lives. Secondly, we must begin to lay the foundations for a rebirth of the normal lifestyle. This means beginning to construct a way of life based upon ritual and spiritual principles; one in which outward activity is directed not only to outward aims, but is continually "referred back" by its traditional form to the centre of all being. The transfer from abnormal life to normal life is in essence a transfer from living "on the surface" to living "from the centre".

The solution: first principles

The ways in which we may begin to recover the normal life will vary with the situation of each person or group of persons. No full attempt can be made to realise the active life can be made outside the context of a community, or at least a relatively large and self contained household; and between the coldest community

of men, and the most unfavourable individual circumstances, every intermediate stage and in will present its own peculiar problems and advantages. Here we will attempt only to give certain fundamental principles.

not what is to

There are two forms of the normal contemplative life: the active life and the contemplative life. In this life the soul is fully active.

and souls among the highest spheres. The activity is not "intellectual" in the proper sense (is exclusively concerned with the higher faculty of reason), nor is it emotional; it is a rising up of the self to the plane of pure intellect, or pure apprehension of Absolute Reality, "changeless, beyond the impermanent flow of time", that is to say, "behind" the purely relative worlds or "shadows" of the material world. This activity of pure intellect is expressed in the Teachings in the words "then shall mind rise up into soul and soul breathe the breath of Spirit". It is, however, an extraordinarily strenuous activity as well as requiring a special aptitude (that is to say, a special state of ^{the} ~~mind~~ ^{being} development), and is, therefore, only the vocation of a relatively small number of people. Our main concern here will be with the active life.

Whereas the contemplative life penetrates behind the veil of matter to the Absolute Reality that lies beyond, the active life remains within the plane of material world. However, it is fully aware of the relative nature of these worlds, and knows that they exist only by virtue of the spiritual Cause and Ground of all being. Therefore no material objective is regarded as an end

* ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{being} ~~mind~~ ^{is} the stream of moral/spiritual causality which continues from one incarnation to another.

is itself, but rather, all outward activity is seen as the expressive of inner Truth. Contingent existence is continually referred back and associated with the first cause from which it flows and upon which it depends.

The contemplative life and the active life are in no way opposed. Rather they are complementary, although not equal. It is said that the contemplative life is the elder sister of the active life, guiding and protecting her, and also teaching her to grow up in her own likeness. For the ultimate aim of the active life (although it is not necessarily to be achieved in this present incarnation) is to transcend outward activity and penetrate the veil of matter; for all truly normal activity leads eventually to the same point. The active life is sometimes called the "hard way", or the "gentle way".

We should be rid of a distinction be drawn between the two lives, for all outward activity, in so far as it is authentically normal, must contain at least a minimal contemplative element. Its very ritual pattern is a constant "reminder" of the eternal Truth which underlies it. Furthermore, certain outward activities, particularly in the sphere of artistic expression, are wholly ^{or partly} contemplative disciplines, whose nature is a normal

art is judged not by their "originality" or individualistic self-expression, but by the contemplative realization of the Work that shines through them, as expressed in the saying: "not I, but she that creates through me". This true art is practised both by contemplatives and by those in active life (usually under the direction of contemplatives), which raises the serious point, that even the strictest contemplative is, by the very fact of inhabiting a material body, necessarily involved in some degree of outward activity, and that by her very presence, as well as by her spiritual ministry, she makes an important, not to say essential, contribution to the normal active community.

There is a third life, which may be called the passive, or passionate life. This life is ~~found~~ ^{lived} according to no principle, but is merely bent upon maximizing pleasure and avoiding pain. This life is, strictly speaking, not human, since it relinquishes the free will which is the essential characteristic of humanity, making the soul the passive plaything of external influences, biological drives, and physiological reactions. The passive life may be exceedingly "active" in the outward sense at times, but this is not the authentic activity of the soul, but merely a reaction to stimuli. The soul is active only in the sense that it is active when borne by a rushing torrent. It is this passivity of the active life which constitutes the

whole life of abnormal societies. This life is bound to a continued frustration, since in its constant round of outward activity it is desperately seeking a depth of peace and satisfaction which, by its very nature, is not to be found in the flux of outward things, but only in the Reality which underlies it.

In the first instance, a considerable part of the development of the normal lifestyle will be negative, since we must begin to cut off the channels by which the passive life is inculcated into us by profane society. The difficulty here is that our natural inclination to take the line of least resistance is always working against us, since the passive life is by definition the line of least resistance. The false self is naturally inclined towards the passive life. That is why the introduction of western attitudes and lifestyles into relatively normal eastern societies has often broken up the traditional way of life even when it was not enforced upon the people compulsorily, merely by the power of "temptation". We will put ourselves in a very vulnerable position if we underestimate this power, and we will do well, as far as possible, to remove ourselves from it.

One particular example of this lies in the profane mass media, particularly

television. The very nature of the media, quite apart from anything they may actually say, is so constituted as to inculcate a profane world-view. They are designed to concentrate upon change, mostly, "news", in other words, to fix the consciousness exclusively upon "the important flux of time". The visual nature of television is designed to fix the mind on outward "things", rather than on fundamental principles, ideas or contemplative truths. These faults are quite apart from the specifically profane and materialistic scale of values which underlies every word written or spoken, the more or less dogmatic assumption that only the outward events of the physical world are "real", and that they exist by and for themselves, with neither cause nor purpose beyond them. This is no less true of those who profess a religion, for except when they are speaking on specifically "religious" subjects, they invariably express views indistinguishable from that of the materialist, though perhaps with a few "religious" catch-phrases by way of decoration. They have no specifically spiritual analysis of the world. There may even merely be negative evil, but all evil is essentially the negation of good, just as ^{all} evil is the negation of worth. Evil is not an entity in its own right. The profane media inculcate a whole view of the world designed to entrap the soul within the outward flux and blind her with the veil of matter.

There is ~~power~~ a temptation to feel that since we realize these things, the ~~revels~~ can have no power to persuade us, and therefore can do us no harm, although they may harm others. Ironically, this is based upon a fallacy which has its roots in profound rationalism: the fallacy that "intellectual" persuasion (in the profound sense) is the only danger. The answer to this lies in the Teachings: "Thoughts of the mind pass not away, nor vanish into air. For every thought is a builder in the subtle world that lies about you." Each time we express ourselves in particular thoughts or currents of thought, structures are being created or strengthened within the psychic and actual material of our subtle bodies.

This last principle is one of the keys to both positive and negative action in the construction of the active life. To put it in another way, the material world is really a realm of symbols rather than realities. If those symbols reflect the Reality which underlies material existence, they participate in its quality of reality. If, on the other hand, they become severed from it, they become like the arbitrary scribbles of an infant on a piece of paper, devoid of significance.

It is necessary, therefore, to exclude

negative influences and to construct positive ones. Grace, rhythm and a certain formality are the hallmarks of the actor's life. The modern use of language and gesture, for example, fosters a casual and "outward" approach to life. Here one must be careful in the use of terms. What is certainly not wanted is a "formality" of the kind cultivated by the governing classes of late patriarchal societies, but rather the easy and natural formality of the earlier patriarchal period: gestures of respect, such as the salute, formulae of speech. One recalls the simple and natural use of "Mari be praised" on referring to the homeliest blessings, and the everyday use of invocations of holy. The remembrance that all words are a species of magic ("I am ... between the lightest word of greeting and the thought from which it flows": Teachings) is a guarantee of a formality of the correct type, since the instinct for correct speech is latent in every human being. Nevertheless, language as a whole is a very involved subject, since the whole modern dialect, and indeed the late patriarchal languages as a whole are very far degenerated from archetypal language, which, very far from having its origins in animal squeaks and grunts, as popular mythology suggests, was a direct manifestation of Divine Intelligence on the particular fallen plane ^{which} we inhabit. There can be no question of the introduction of an artificial language. We must

work with the languages we have, allowing the Madrian communities to develop first their own dialect, and gradually, over several generations, their own distinctive language. Insofar as this language develops out of an authentically normal way of life, it will be a sacred language, having retained and purified that which is true in contemporary languages, replaced that which has been lost and discarded all that is false. The fostering of developments of this sort is another reason for the isolation of the community, so far as possible, from profane influences. The slowness of this process should not be a source of discouragement; firstly, because it is one of the marks of abnormal society that its thinking never extends beyond the next generation, owing to its immersion in the cults of speed and immediacy, secondly, because there is no implication that the very earliest forms of purified speech will not be an immeasurable improvement on current profane language. Very much the reverse; and the real nature of language is understood, and that understanding is put into practice, we have already stepped over the boundary which divides normal speech from profane speech. We are encamped, so to speak, in sacred territory; the task that follows is the building of a permanent citadel.

Clothes, decoration, forms of recreation, etc.

should never be devoid of higher meaning, for that would be to imply the self-existence of material things. This is not to say that, for example, our stories and poems should all be "religious" in the restricted sense which that term has acquired in profane society. On the contrary, all authentic art whether "folk-art" or "high-art" has a metaphysical dimension; the genuine fairy-tale is always an allegory of the soul's quest (it is the characteristic failure to understand this - or at a deeper level, the unconscious realisation of it - which has induced modern society to banish the fairy-tale to the nursery. It was never written for children alone). So-called "realistic" art, on the other hand, has for its "moral" the self-existence of material events. The distinction between art and craft is also false, based on the one hand on the profane cult of "originality" in art, and on the other, upon the degeneration of craft into mere "production". In a normal community, both art and craft are the expression of primordial principles, with traditions of form and style governing every aspect; which far from limiting the expression of the craftsmaid, provides her with that field of expression within which alone she can convey genuine meaning.

Spiritual leadership and direction is particularly important in the process of distinguishing harmonic forms of expression

from dissonant ones, and in creating cohesion within the community as a whole. Profane society, while imposing an increasing uniformity of lifestyle and activity upon all its members, together with a continuing "standardisation" of the artefacts and influences which affect their everyday life, encourages a lack of discipline in all matters of ^{personal} behaviour and a disregard for all forms of courtesy, respect and obedience on the personal level. This is calculated to strengthen the passive life, by making the individual increasingly subject to impersonal stimuli, while simultaneously undermining the willed control of outward actions which is the essential characteristic of the active life. On the esoteric level, it also helps to prevent any workable alternative to profane society from emerging by ensuring that personal discipline is absent and

genuine authority (which is always based upon spiritual principles) is confused with the tyrannical (because unfounded) pseudo-authority of profane society. Thus the vast majority of "alternatives" founded on purely secular, or inauthentically "spiritual" bases, have collapsed in a welter of conflicting personalities. While it is unlikely that a Madrian community would make this elementary mistake, it is essential that a sound authority should run throughout the community, and that no concessions be made to the falsely "libertarian" conditioning of profane

society (the express purpose of which is to destroy the liberty of the soul by making her "passion's slave"); while at the same time, that authority should be constantly referred back to its spiritual bases and not exercised outside them, otherwise it will degenerate into mere tyranny of the profane order.

Crafts and work which is in tune with the rhythms of nature are best suited to a normal community; and it is essential that an entirely new rhythm should begin to pervade the community as a whole. A slower rhythm; a rhythm suited to the human being and her natural environment rather than to the machine; a rhythm which will welcome the re-telling of old stories without craving for novelty or novels, which in all things is released from the necessity for ever new stimuli. A new simplicity and a sense of wonder in simple things, which is in a sense a refining of the perception until it begins to see the unity underlying all things. The profane rhythm of the working week must give way to the sacred rhythms of the moon and the sun. These rhythms are an expression of the childlikeness enjoined upon us in the Myths. They are nurtured by the ritualisation of life, and by the setting up of patterns in dance and song and ritual drama. Above all, they will be fostered by the habit of contemplation, and the presence within the

community of at least one person pursuing the fully contemplative life will be of inestimable value.

Touching only on principles, we have said but little about the actual practices which a community might establish. Some of these will be suggested in the companion-paper to this, to which this paper really forms a preface. Yet the principles enunciated here will prove fruitful if applied contemplatively and prayerfully to a living situation. They may be summarised in three words: live from the Centre, harmonise, control. They are perfectly expressed in the following passage, and in the whole of the Teachings from which it is taken:

"It is not possible that a flute should play at once two tunes. Nor may any maid pursue at once true wisdom and the false. Therefore, be you attuned to the music of Eternity, and dance within the rhythm of the Mysteries and the seasons. Let your soul be simple, that she may be a mirror of pure love."